

AMERICA CARES ACT

Y 4. L 11/4: S. HRG. 103-269

America Cares Act, S. Hrg. 103-269,...

HEARING

OF THE

**COMMITTEE ON
LABOR AND HUMAN RESOURCES
UNITED STATES SENATE
ONE HUNDRED THIRD CONGRESS****FIRST SESSION**

ON

S. 1190

TO REQUIRE THE SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES TO ESTABLISH AN AMERICA CARES PROGRAM TO PROVIDE FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS FOR THE PROVISION OF VOUCHERS AND CASH CONTRIBUTIONS FOR GOODS AND SERVICES FOR HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS, TO PROVIDE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND PUBLIC INFORMATION, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

JULY 21, 1993

Printed for the use of the Committee on Labor and Human Resources



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THE AMERICA CARES ACT

WEDNESDAY, JULY 21, 1993

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND HUMAN RESOURCES,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 12:20 p.m., in room SD-430, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Senator Jeff Bingaman, presiding.

Present: Senator Bingaman.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR BINGAMAN

Senator BINGAMAN. Let's get started on our hearing on the homeless legislation.

I want to thank everybody for being here, particularly the witnesses.

This is a short hearing that we are wedging in between some other things because of all the other activity going on here in the Congress, but I think it is an important hearing, because I do believe that the legislation that we have introduced, the America Cares Act, building on the Berkeley Cares program, is an important initiative for the whole country to concentrate its attention on.

Let me just thank Senator Kennedy again for allowing us to have the hearing. This hearing is essential before we can take any action on the legislation, and that is why we were anxious to have it today.

As some of you know, I first became interested in pursuing legislation like this after seeing a television story about Berkeley Cares which I think CNN was running on an airplane that I was flying across the country on. It seemed to me that what Berkeley was doing could be a model for what a lot of communities might be able to do to deal with the homeless problem. Accordingly, we tried to get more information on it.

The people at Berkeley Cares were extremely helpful to us in explaining the program and helping us to put together legislation, which we have now introduced. And I do think that we have the chance here to move ahead and have a very innovative program that Berkeley began spread to a lot of other communities. That is our hope.

The way we have drafted this legislation, it is Senate bill 1190, sponsored by Senator Harkin, Senator Feinstein, and myself. It provides competitive grants up to \$60,000 to each of 60 local organizations in 60 communities around the country to start programs similar to this. Each program would provide a 25 percent match in order to qualify for the grant. The 60 programs created by the leg-

islation would be demonstration programs in that each State and the District of Columbia would have an opportunity to participate or to propose to participate, and in selecting the programs, the Secretary of Health and Human Services would look at the extent of community interest, look for different ideas about how this voucher system could be most effectively used. In addition, the Secretary would examine possibilities for providing contributions for homeless service providers, which is an issue we want to discuss after hearing the testimony. And at the end of 1 year, the Secretary would then look at the results of these programs and report back to us as to whether the Federal Government needed to continue with a level of support, or whether this is something that made sense for other communities.

Programs like this, I believe, are not a substitute for addressing the root causes of homelessness, but without programs like this, I don't know if we are going to be able to mobilize private citizens to help in solving the problem. So I think that is the great strength of it.

Small amounts of money required to set up some additional seed programs, or to seed the establishment of more pilot programs like this, I think might be well-spent taxpayer dollars.

[The prepared statement of Senator Bingaman follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF SENATOR BINGAMAN

Mr. President, I rise today to introduce legislation to enable communities across the Nation to create programs to enhance private giving to the homeless.

This legislation, called America Cares, is based on the positive experience of Berkeley Cares, a partnership of businesses, homeless service providers, and concerned citizens that jointed together to try to address the issue of panhandling by the homeless in Berkeley's business areas. After much discussion, this group decided to try the idea of providing vouchers for sell to citizens, who could then give these vouchers to the homeless. These vouchers would be redeemable for food, toiletries, and other goods and services, but could not be redeemed for alcohol or tobacco.

The program has been a tremendous success. First, it has provided help to the homeless. Ordinary people now know they can help the homeless with the assurance that any donation they make through vouchers will not be used for drugs or alcohol. There is no doubt that the vouchers have assisted in helping turn lives around by providing access to food and other basic necessities. For some homeless individuals, this program has been the first step on the way back to self-reliance.

Second, the Berkeley Cares model gives ordinary citizens a way to help homeless people that they can feel great about. I think all of us have had the experience of being approached by someone begging for money. On the other hand, we have the sinking feeling that the money we give will not end up helping. This fear that the panhandler will only use the money for alcohol or drugs holds us back. So sometimes we refuse to give, and then castigate ourselves for not being generous. But other times we give anyway, and we castigate ourselves for being taken for suckers.

The voucher program gives ordinary citizens a chance to help the homeless directly and feel good about their giving and their concern. They can be assured that every voucher they pay for and hand to someone who is homeless can only be redeemed for food and other goods and services that will in reality help them—help them to maintain their physical health and self-esteem.

Third, the program has also helped the business community. Some of the aggressive panhandlers in Berkeley simply moved on, moved away, when it became apparent that a sizeable number of people would give them vouchers that could not be used for drugs or alcohol. Many others used the vouchers for goods and services in local businesses, which in turn could be redeemed for cash by the merchants. Thus, new customers for businesses have been created, in a sense, by the vouchers. Early fears that homeless people redeeming vouchers in a store would “scare off” other customers proved to be groundless. In fact, participating businesses have found that many customers patronize business establishments who sell and redeem vouchers, in a show of appreciation for their involvement in Berkeley Cares.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the Berkeley Cares program has helped educate the community about the issues of the homeless. By helping individuals help others, it has “primed the pump” for bringing the community’s voluntary talents and resources to bear on solving the problems faced by the homeless. General awareness in the Berkeley community has increased as people have begun to see themselves as part of the solution to these problems.

As this awareness has increased, homeless service providers have seen increased support, in part through a separate contribution aspect of the Berkeley Cares program. Communication between service providers, citizens, and the business community has also increased.

I think this Berkeley Cares experience can benefit other communities. Indeed, other cities are already attempting to set up programs. In Albuquerque, NM, for example, there is some interest in creating a program in at least one neighborhood shopping area.

My legislation helps new programs get started. It provides competitive grants of up to \$60,000 to at least 60 local organizations to start programs like Berkeley Cares. Each program will provide a 25 percent match to qualify for the grant. The 60 programs created by this legislation will be demonstration programs in the widest sense of the word. In selecting the programs, the Secretary of Health and Human Services will look for diverse ideas regarding where the vouchers are sold, and what goods and services they are redeemable for. In addition, the Secretary will examine possibilities for providing contributions for homeless service providers. At the end of the year, the Secretary will look at the results of these diverse programs, and considering what might work in their communities.

My approach is cost-effective. The very small amount of money required to seed these new programs will, if these programs work, direct much more private money than is now made available to help meet the needs of homeless people. The key to America Cares is that it unleashes the great good will and generosity of the ordi-

nary citizens and businesses to help the homeless and feel a great pride about their generosity. It will accomplish the direction of substantially more private resources to meet the needs of the homeless.

But it is also important to stress that programs created through America Cares are no substitute for addressing the root causes of homelessness. We as a nation cannot turn our back on the need to ensure adequate affordable housing, job training, and health care. Without each of these elements in place, it is likely that homelessness will remain with us. America Cares, however, can be a cost effective way in which the Federal Government can help local communities alleviate some of the pain of those who are homeless, and help mobilize communities across the Nation to fight the root causes of homelessness.

I ask unanimous consent that the text of the America Cares legislation be placed in the record following this statement.

(FROM THE NEW YORK TIMES—THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 1991)

BERKELEY'S ANSWER TO BEGGING—VOUCHERS FOR FOOD, LAUNDRY AND HOT SHOWERS

BY IRA EISENBERG

San Francisco likes to proclaim itself "the city that knows how," and its citizens look down their noses at what they snidely refer to as the People's Republic of Berkeley.

Yet the community across the bay has lately succeeded where San Francisco has failed. Berkeley has found an effective and humane way to discourage panhandlers without violating anyone's rights or endowing yet another costly government bureaucracy.

In April, and with little more than enthusiastic encouragement from City Hall, town merchants, social service providers and the University of California created the Berkeley Cares Voucher Program.

Instead of shunning street beggars, or grudgingly handing them cash, Berkeley residents can now offer panhandlers vouchers purchased from local merchants. The vouchers are as good as real money for buying food, laundry, services, bus fares, even hot showers. They can't be exchanged for alcohol or cigarettes, let alone illegal drugs.

Here's how the plan works. The vouchers are worth 25 cents each and can be exchanged at a growing number of participating businesses or agencies. Some 7,600 vouchers—about \$1,900 worth—have already been sold at Berkeley City Hall and by downtown merchants. The forgery-proof vouchers are printed and distributed by the Associated Students organization at the university.

The voucher program is only in its infancy, but by all accounts Berkeley's street people are already eating and even smelling better, and those desperate for hard currency to finance a drug habit are drifting elsewhere. Shoppers are cautiously returning to embattled Telegraph Avenue, a shopping street near the campus. And merchants are now eagerly selling and accepting vouchers. According to Rebecca Rhine of the Telegraph Avenue Merchants association, the plan "has already altered the economy of panhandling."

Around the same time that the Berkeley Cares program was being developed, the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce and the city's Mayor, Art Agnos, were also touting a voucher system aimed at panhandlers. But their proposed vouchers would merely have been notes directing the recipient to sources of free food and other services. They would have had no cash value and couldn't be used to buy a sandwich or wash clothes.

The plan bore all the earmarks of a publicity stunt and dropped from sight when critics pointed out that handing a slip of worthless paper to a hungry or strung-out street person was no way to discourage aggressiveness.

Berkeley Cares is not a government or university-sponsored program. Though the city provided funds to get it off the ground, the program springs from a community that insists on governing itself. "This is clearly an idea that works," says Mayor Loni Hancock of Berkeley. She has received calls from officials in Detroit, Phoenix,

Philadelphia and even San Francisco seeking advice on how to start voucher programs.

Even its most enthusiastic boosters don't believe vouchers are the solution to homelessness. As Mayor Hancock acknowledges, "It's impossible for any city to really solve the homeless problem within its borders because the problem doesn't originate locally. Homelessness is a national problem."

So, while the burghers of San Francisco fume and fuss about "those people" who sleep in parks, urinate in doorways and beg on the streets, the good citizens of Berkeley have found a way to help the homeless as well as themselves, and improve both the economic and social climate of their community. Now that's a city that knows how.

[FROM THE WASHINGTON POST—SUNDAY, JULY 4, 1993]

VOUCHERS: A WAY TO FEEL GOOD AGAIN ABOUT GIVING

The DC government recently instituted an ordinance to outlaw aggressive panhandling, because people who once gave freely to those in need had come to feel so threatened by the throngs that seemed to accost them at every corner, stoplight and metro stop that they demanded legal protection.

But clearing the street and punishing all panhandlers isn't the way to turn this situation around in Washington or in any other city. We need to address the root causes of homelessness; we need to improve housing and health care and provide the homeless with job training and employment opportunities. However, that doesn't mean we should stop our individual efforts to help the homeless, one person at a time.

Most Washingtonians still want to help the homeless they see on the streets, but they are frustrated by not knowing what happens to the money they give away—is their spare change feeding a hungry person or a drug habit? Are panhandlers out to make easy money, or worse, are they setting people up to be robbed?

Berkeley, Calif., has found an innovative way to address these issues. Through a program called Berkeley Cares, its citizens can buy vouchers to give to homeless people, who can then redeem them for food and other necessities—but not for items like tobacco or alcohol. The vouchers have a value of only 25 cents to discourage counterfeiting.

The program, which has the support of the city's downtown merchants, has been a success on several fronts. It has helped educate the community about the problems of the homeless and has helped people see themselves as part of the solution. It also has rid the community of some of its more aggressive panhandlers, who moved on when they could no longer solicit cash to spend on drugs or alcohol.

And it has helped the business community. Some Berkeley merchants initially worried that homeless people redeeming vouchers would drive away other customers. The opposite turned out to be true—people actually patronized participating businesses to show their support for the program. In Berkeley, citizens are now taking personal responsibility for what is seen as the community's problem rather than a problem for some bureaucracy.

As word of the success of the Berkeley program spreads, similar programs might spring up on their own in other American cities. But I want to help this process along with legislation I introduced last week in the Senate called "America Cares." The \$3.6 million my bill would authorize would provide seed money funds to start at least 60 Berkeley-style voucher programs at a modest Federal investment of no more than \$60,000 a program. Each program would have to provide a 25 percent match in funds to qualify for the grants.

Of course, the America Cares initiative alone will not eliminate homelessness. But voucher programs can help homeless people acquire the essentials to become self-reliant and can be instrumental in mobilizing voluntary community resources to work on homelessness. And voucher programs also would go a long way toward eliminating the mistrust and guilt on the part of the homeless and those who are considering helping them.

If we can make people feel good again about giving to their neighbors, If we can let people know that their money is doing the good that they hoped it would, then maybe we can reverse the trend signaled by laws like the one of the District recently passed to restrict contact between panhandlers and other citizens. Maybe we could get back to a place where the sight of a homeless person is a cause for concern.

Jeff Bingaman, a Democrat, is a U.S. Senator from New Mexico.

Senator BINGAMAN. Let me start by introducing our witnesses. Our first panel includes Amy Maddock and Rebecca Rhine of the Berkeley Cares program. Amy staffs the Berkeley Cares program, and Rebecca has been involved in the program since its inception. It has been very generous, as I indicated before, in helping us to draft this legislation.

Which of you would like to start?

Ms. RHINE. I will, Senator.

Senator BINGAMAN. OK, Rebecca, why don't you go right ahead. We are glad you are here, and thank you for coming.

STATEMENTS OF REBECCA RHINE AND AMY MADDOCK, BERKELEY CARES, BERKELEY, CA

Ms. RHINE. Thank you for inviting us. Obviously, we are delighted to be here.

As you said, I was there at the beginning, and you know what they say—you can always blame those who were there at the beginning.

Berkeley Cares came into being because Berkeley, like every other urban area in this country, has had over the past 12 years problems with panhandling and related street behaviors that have often alienated community members.

We had a severe problem like other urban areas, and we had to figure out what to do about it.

There had been attempts made by isolated groups, the service providers or just the business community, to come up with a workable program, and none of those programs worked alone. So we got together a group of about 18 people—service providers, the homeless themselves, the business community, people from the University of California at Berkeley, people from the City of Berkeley. We all sat down, and the basic ground rule was that we had to tell the truth to each other, we had to be frank, honest, and really describe the problem from each perspective. And that is what we did.

So over a series of about five or six meetings, people were real frank—business people describing the direct impact on business from aggressive panhandling; service providers were very frank in describing the impact on a panhandler of being treated like an inanimate object.

We knew that a police solution to aggressive panhandling was not one that we in the City of Berkeley would ever use because we felt it was morally wrong, and it did not really address the problem. Using a police solution was not getting the community involved in helping to solve a problem.

So we decided that we wanted to do something, and at one of our meetings somebody said, "Why don't we do a voucher program?" To this day, we don't know who it was who said that. Brainstorming sessions are like that, and we still don't know. But we decided to do it, and in the course of about 10 months, with a lot of volunteer hours, we started the program with \$5,500 in seed money. We started Berkeley Cares 2 years ago this week, and since then, the program has grown enormously.

We have been delighted with the level of education in the community about Berkeley Cares. What Berkeley Cares has done is show the community that each individual act has an impact on the

quality of life on the street and on the homeless person who is a recipient of a voucher instead of cash.

I personally knew the program was going to work before we had even started it. We received an enormous amount of press attention. I was approached by a reporter from a local newspaper who told me, "I just walked down Telegraph Avenue, and at random, I selected eight people who were panhandling, and I asked them how they felt about the idea of getting a 25-cent voucher instead of cash." And five of the eight said to this reporter almost exactly the same thing, which was: "Well, I guess it's a good idea because it means I'll have to cut down on my drinking."

When I heard that, I knew, even before we started the program, that we were going to be successful, because that was exactly what we wanted to do—help people in a positive, compassionate way, but not help them be self-destructive. And we knew we could educate the community about that and get people to participate. It is an individual act. It is easy. It is tremendously positive and hopeful.

Out of this group of people who had competing interests, we now have a very harmonious group that works together in lots of ways. We still have our differences, but we realized that as a community, we had to address the program jointly, and we have been enormously pleased. So we did all of this with volunteer effort until finally, in April of 1992, we had raised enough money so that we were able to hire someone, and we were very pleased to have found Amy Maddock, who has been running the program for us since then, although still with an enormous amount of volunteer help from our board.

So Amy is going to describe a bit about the program and how it is actually working these days.

Thank you.

Senator BINGAMAN. Thank you very much.

Amy, go right ahead.

Ms. MADDOCK. Thank you, Senator.

First, I'd like to say that Berkeley Cares started in two test commercial districts in Berkeley with about 45 participating businesses. We have since grown to five commercial districts with about 130 participating businesses. Those three additional commercial districts that came into our program came at their request. I mean, we would have gotten to them sooner or later, but they beat us to the phone and asked to come into our program.

This is a program that businesses like, businesses want to participate in; their customers are asking them to please participate in this so that they may have the vouchers available to them at places that are convenient to them, where they shop. So it has definitely been appreciated by the business community. We have three other commercial districts that are very interested in coming into the program at this point. I feel that that is just tremendous, and the program speaks for itself in that regard.

Also, the homeless population have appreciated this program, and I would like to demonstrate that fact by giving you some statistics. To date, we have sold over 230,000 vouchers in our 2 years of operation, and to mirror that number, we have had about a 70 percent redemption rate, which is really a very extraordinary number when you take some facts into consideration—like many groups

buy these in large blocks of \$1,000 or more, so obviously, they are not all given out at the same time, and they are obviously not all redeemed at the same time; and also that we are such a young program, and people are still learning about it. So I think 70 percent is really a great redemption rate. And our service providers have been very pleased with that in particular because they have told us that any time you add another step to the daily routine of a street person, the chances of that being carried out are very, very low, and the fact that they have come to value these, and that they are redeeming them shows that they know what they are, they are using them, and they like them.

So we are very pleased with that fact as well.

Berkeley Cares also gets tremendous numbers of inquiries from across the Nation. I would like to tell you that we have had over 500 separate inquiries since I have been working at Berkeley Cares, which has only been 1 year, and that does not include the press. These are people who want to start programs across the United States.

So I feel that there is definitely a need at the national level for some leadership to start a program such as you suggested. We have been helping people as best we can, but obviously, given the number of inquiries, we could use some help. And I think that you are exactly right when you say that \$60,000 is a very modest amount of money in terms of what a program like this can offer a community. It can also offer the community a much better chance of getting it off the ground and really helping the people who need to be helped, instead of running around like chickens with their heads cut off, like we have had to do for the first 2 years, with our \$5,500 in seed money, and yet we still successfully managed to do this program.

So I strongly endorse this legislation given that those numbers have increased; it definitely bears out that this program is in need, and Berkeley Cares fully supports it.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Berkeley Cares follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF BERKELEY CARES

INTRODUCTION

Berkeley Cares, a non-profit organization administering a voucher and donation collection program, began operating in July 1991. It is a community developed program that provides cash collection boxes for donations to local homeless service providers, and a voucher system for those who wish to help panhandlers but do not wish their contribution to be used for alcohol or tobacco.

Through a network of participating merchant and municipal "sellers," customers may purchase 25 cent vouchers that are redeemable at participating business (called "redeemers") for coin laundry usage, bus rides, clothing, and general merchandise including food and personal care products. Customers then give the vouchers, instead of cash, to panhandlers, who use them for the goods and services named above. These same sellers also have Berkeley Cares program information available in their business and a cash collection box. The cash contributions are distributed to local homeless service providers so that public contributions may reach the 85 percent to 90 percent of those in need who do not panhandle.

The Berkeley Cares program is different from the existing Federal Food Stamp Program in that the vouchers may be used for a broad variety of basic needs other than just food. The program specifically excludes alcohol and tobacco, and the vouchers have a small denomination and no change is given when using a voucher for a purchase. The general public can purchase the vouchers and give them directly

to help the homeless. Also, anyone may ask for a voucher. There are no financial tests or bureaucracy to establish eligibility requirements and no cost to the taxpayer.

HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

Berkeley Cares was created by a coalition of people concerned about homelessness. The homeless service providers, the homeless themselves, the business community, the University of California at Berkeley and the city of Berkeley all were represented from the beginning. The idea to get together and see what could be done to address aggressive panhandling and other disruptive street behaviors came from the business community, which was concerned about marketing studies showing that the number one reason people gave for avoiding the major commercial areas in Berkeley was panhandling. The service providers were interested in participating because they were concerned about a backlash against the homeless due to aggressive street behavior and the public's frustration with the lack of apparently effective programs.

The first few meetings were designed for us to really get to know one another and clearly hear about the problem from each perspective. No one felt that using a traditional police response to the problem was appropriate. We agreed that it would be morally wrong. Panhandling is protected speech and using police to intimidate or harass would be illegal. We knew that we needed to identify the problems leading to the aggressive behavior and stop them at the source. Since much aggressive panhandling is tied to mental illness, and alcohol and other substance abuse, we decided to change the economics on the street and make less cash available that could be used for drugs and alcohol.

The business community as well as the other groups involved were committed to helping those in need, and not just making cosmetic changes. Through the group participation process we developed the idea of using vouchers to limit the amount of cash on the streets, and using the cash collection boxes to increase donations given to local homeless service providers.

All of the participants have come to understand each other and each other's problems in a real way and recognize that the entire community must be involved in helping those in need. We agreed that we needed to change the way the community perceived homelessness. Through group process we developed the whole Berkeley Cares program, from philosophy through everyday working procedures. Ten months and approximately eight hundred hours of volunteer time later, we were able to launch our program.

We have a valuable program that can be taught to others while building a community coalition that will implement it. We have received an enormous amount of press attention and support, as well as a very positive response from all segments of the community. The police, service providers and business community all tell us that there has been a clear decline in aggressive panhandling. The business community is pleased and enthusiastic about participating and the homeless themselves like the program. They say that those who give them vouchers are, "nicer and treat me like I'm a human being." The City of Berkeley has received thousands of dollars of free, very positive publicity and indeed, the International Association of city Managers, at its international meeting in Nashville this September, will be giving the City of Berkeley an award for its role in helping implement this innovative program.

The homeless service providers like Berkeley Cares because it is doing a good job of educating the community about homelessness and it gives people a positive way to help. The general public likes Berkeley Cares because it makes giving easier, provides multiple sites for donating, and assures that the donation will be used positively. It takes away the need for that internal dialogue we have with ourselves every time we are asked for money and have to decide if it will help or hurt.

An unanticipated byproduct of the Berkeley Cares program is that we have become a forum for broad community discussion of homelessness and related issues. The Berkeley Cares "coalition approach" has become a model which the community is using successfully to address these and other issues in a positive way.

EVALUATION

The Berkeley Cares office has acted as a clearing house and resource center for other programs, most of which heard of Berkeley Cares through the national media. The program has clearly struck a strong nerve in people. There have been over five hundred separate inquiries from thirty five states and from several different countries. We have spent countless hours on telephone consulting, and days with visitors who have come to see the program in operation. We have been pleased to offer every conceivable kind of help, from basic philosophy down to minute details about vouch-

er design. Seven similar programs are already up and running and there are at least twelve others currently in development.

Local success is demonstrated by a variety of factors. Voucher sales, which reflect public participation in the program, have steadily increased every month. To date we have sold two hundred and thirty thousand vouchers. Voucher redemption rate patterns mirror the increase in sales.

The homeless are increasingly aware of the program, which is reflected by the steady rise in redemption rates. Redemption rates, which started at about 30 percent, rose to 70 percent during the first year of the program, which far surpassed our expectations for a new program. This high redemption rate is especially appreciated by service providers, who tell us that any time you add a step to a street person's routine, the chances of it being carried out are very low.

The acceptance of vouchers by the homeless community and panhandlers is an essential element to the success of the program, so much so that those who do not panhandle ask service providers how to obtain them. This has prompted most participating service providers and many churches to make vouchers available to non-panhandlers.

The business community has strongly supported Berkeley Cares since it began. Initially there were forty-five participating businesses in our two test areas. Currently there are one hundred and thirty participating businesses. The program's effectiveness has prompted requests from other commercial districts to become a part of Berkeley Cares. There are five commercial districts currently participating, with three other expressing a strong interest in joining.

The program has captured the attention of the City of Berkeley, which recently granted Berkeley Cares funds to expand in currently participating districts and into new areas. This expansion will add service providers and triple the number of businesses that collect donations and sell and redeem vouchers. The Berkeley Police Department strongly supports this expansion because it has found that Berkeley Cares reduces aggressive panhandling complaints, which frees officers for more substantive service calls.

The community has acknowledged the effectiveness of Berkeley Cares by awarding it the 1991 Berkeley Peace Prize and the 1992 regional J.C. Penney Golden Rule Award. The best indicator of the success of the program is the level of community acceptance. Increased voucher sales, volunteer participation and the popularity of our speaker's Bureau at neighborhood meetings demonstrate the broad level of community support.

AMERICA CARES

In April 1992, Senator Bingaman's office contacted Berkeley Cares for information. Since then, Berkeley Cares has been in frequent contact with his staff, and has provided detailed information on the operation and philosophy behind Berkeley Cares. At their request Berkeley Cares has worked with them to develop the America Cares Act legislation.

An increasing number of people in this country view traditional homeless programs as ineffective. Some believe that there is no solution to homelessness and most of us are frustrated with the apparent lack of progress. Young people are particularly vulnerable to hopelessness about this issue because most of them cannot remember a time when there were not a lot of people living on the street in abject poverty, asking for money, sleeping in doorways and living out of shopping carts. Berkeley Cares is a program that involves the community and educates it to look at homelessness in a new way. It also shows how each individual can directly make a powerful and positive difference in the quality of life of those in need, and in the quality of life of every person who uses the public sidewalks. Homelessness and related issues are complex problems that have no quick fix solutions. A Cares type program involves individuals and their communities in a new, dynamic approach that confronts the myths that have fostered hopelessness and helplessness.

Berkeley Cares strongly supports the America Cares Act legislation. Based on the large number of inquiries from around the country, it is clear that there is a great need for leadership from a national program that addresses panhandling and street behavior issues in a positive manner at the local level.

Senator BINGAMAN. Thank you.

Let me just ask as to how it works in more concrete ways. Perhaps, Amy, you could describe who does the actual printing of these vouchers, and how are they distributed, and how are they redeemed. Maybe you could go into that a little bit.

Mr. Maddock. Sure. We have a printing company that prints the vouchers for us. We are fortunate that we have a security process that we have been allowed to use, called the "wicker process," so they print these vouchers for us with a security process on them so they cannot be photocopied or reproduced.

Then, we have volunteers and myself, who actually take these vouchers out to merchants. We give them new vouchers when we need them, and we collect the money from the sales of their vouchers at that same visit, and we also collect the redeemed vouchers from the merchants who are redeemers, and at a later point shortly thereafter, we issue a check that is sent through the mail or hand-delivered.

So that has basically just been done by myself. I am the only staff person—that is, until recently; we just hired one more last week.

Senator BINGAMAN. Let me be sure I understand. You distribute these vouchers to these 130-some merchants, and those merchants then sell the vouchers to anybody who wants to buy a voucher.

Ms. MADDOCK. That's correct.

Senator BINGAMAN. So if I walk in there and say, "Give me \$5 worth of your vouchers," I can just buy that like you buy postage stamps at the grocer store.

Ms. MADDOCK. Exactly. It is another form of currency is basically what it is. We aren't selling a product. We are just giving someone the opportunity to make a choice as to what form of currency he or she would like to give to some person that he or she deems in need.

Senator BINGAMAN. So then I would take that \$5 worth of vouchers with me, and as I went down the street, if I wanted to give a particular person 50 cents worth of vouchers or a dollar's worth of vouchers, I could tear those off and hand them to that person; then, that person goes back into a merchant, one of the cooperating or participating merchants—

Ms. MADDOCK. A redeemer, yes.

Senator BINGAMAN. Redeeming merchants, and gets anything—what can he get for those vouchers?

Ms. MADDOCK. The vouchers are redeemable at a number of locations. In general, they are good for laundry services, bus transportation, groceries, and sundries. For instance, at a Safeway grocer store, which is our local chain, they can redeem them for anything there except alcohol and tobacco. So anything else that Safeway sells, they are redeemable for. And we do not give change back.

On that note, I'd like to say that was one of the reasons why we made the denomination of the voucher 25 cents, because we don't give change back, and we did not want to encourage panhandling by making the amount lucrative, and we also did not want to dictate to the giver how much they must give. So by making them 25 cents, we have allowed each individual to make all of those choices.

Senator BINGAMAN. Let me just follow this all the way through the process. The homeless person takes the vouchers into Safeway and says, "I would like to buy a can of beans," or whatever, and presents the vouchers. He cannot get change for it, but he can get the can of beans or whatever, depending on how many vouchers

that person is able to present. And then Safeway presumably keeps those vouchers and then presents a bill to Berkeley Cares.

Ms. MADDOCK. Safeway actually presents the redeemed vouchers. Each business that redeems them gives me all of their redeemed vouchers, we count them, and then we issue them a check.

Senator BINGAMAN. So part of your job is to first go around to all of the businesses and collect the money they have obtained from selling the vouchers. And if the system has no leakage in it—I mean, if every voucher that is sold is actually redeemed—the idea would be that the money you collect from the merchants would equal the amount you have paid out to merchants for those vouchers when they were redeemed. But in fact, only 70 percent of your vouchers are redeemed.

Ms. MADDOCK. That's correct.

Senator BINGAMAN. So you are accumulating funds in this process. About 30 percent of the money you receive from merchants when they sell vouchers is not required to be paid back.

Ms. MADDOCK. It is held within a fund, though, because at any one time, of course, those vouchers could be redeemed, given that we are selling them in large blocks. But yes, that's correct.

Senator BINGAMAN. But you have been building up some reserve in that fund?

Ms. MADDOCK. Yes.

Ms. RHINE. Actually, it's more of a float, because those vouchers are out there, and they could be redeemed. We know that a certain percentage of them will be lost or laundered or something, and not redeemed. But you don't really know, so in a way, we kind of call that money our integrity, in the sense that it is always there and available in case they are redeemed.

Senator BINGAMAN. But I think a key point which we need to make here and which I need to be clear on is that the issuance and redemption of the vouchers themselves is not something that costs money. The only cost is the cost of printing the vouchers and the cost of somebody like yourself, whose job it is to go around the make the system function.

Ms. MADDOCK. Exactly. The two biggest costs are my salary and the printing of the vouchers; you are absolutely correct.

Senator BINGAMAN. OK. I think that's an important point, because any time you propose a program here in the Congress, everybody says, oh, gee, here is another one of these deals where the taxpayer is going to be paying out a bunch of money every year, and it just goes down a rat hole, and there is no end in sight.

This is not a program like that. This is a program to facilitate private contributions to solve this problem. Is that correct?

Ms. MADDOCK. Yes, and in fact, anecdotally, I might add that I have had the experience of many individuals, when they have overheard me in a store talking to the business owner, come up and say, "You know, I never used to give to panhandlers at all, or I gave very little, but now as a result of your program, I give a lot more money because I feel more comfortable with what I am doing with my money."

That was pretty good testimony to I think what a lot of people in the general public feel or fear about giving their cash to people on the street.

Senator BINGAMAN. You said you had 230,00 of these vouchers sold and 70 percent of them redeemed. So 230,000 would represent about one-fourth of that, say \$75,000 or so worth of vouchers have been sold.

Ms. MADDOCK. Whatever the math works out to; that's not my strong suit—but yes.

Senator BINGAMAN. Well, if each voucher is worth 25 cents, then about \$75,000 worth of vouchers have been sold in Berkeley.

Ms. MADDOCK. Yes. That is \$75,000 off the streets in Berkeley.

Senator BINGAMAN. Right. So that you've had \$75,000 contributed, or at least sold, in vouchers; only 75 percent of it has been redeemed. So presumably, \$75,000 has been purchased by people to give to homeless folks, and then the homeless people have turned in about 70 percent of that, or \$55,000 to \$60,000 has actually been obtained in the way of goods and services, whatever.

Ms. MADDOCK. That's correct.

Senator BINGAMAN. How do some of the organizations that are working to help the homeless in your community react to this program? I mean, I assume you have the Salvation Army or other organizations in the community that have feeding programs and others?

Ms. MADDOCK. Oh, yes, certainly. We have eight service providers who actually work with Berkeley Cares, or maybe under an umbrella, however you choose to look at it. There is a second part of our program which we actually have not talked about, which is the donation component of our program. At the same merchants that redeem and sell vouchers, we also have cash collection boxes, and 100 percent of those funds is distributed to the eight homeless service providers that now work with Berkeley Cares.

So needless to say, they are very supportive of the program and not just because they get donations, but because it is good for them in a lot of ways, and one of the ways in which it is good for them is they have the opportunity to give vouchers to people who come into their shelters and their feeding programs and their job programs who do not panhandle. A lot of those people still need assistance, too. Just because they have services available to them doesn't mean they can't use more.

So it is very positive in that respect as well, and it also gets people to services who need services. They are able to reach them in a lot more ways because of Berkeley Cares. They are able to offer them not only the vouchers, but whatever services they have available. So they have been very supportive. From the very beginning, we have had service providers involved in this organization, and they have contributed enormous input which has been extremely valuable to the organization—and I don't know if Rebecca wants to say more on that.

Ms. RHINE. Well, I think that it is very important. There are a lot of people who feel that giving money to panhandlers is not something they want to do, but they still want to help people who are in need. So right from the beginning, we had a two-pronged program. The vouchers were the most innovative part of it that received the most attention, but always equally important in our minds, was the donation aspect of the program.

We felt that it was so important to make money available to service providers, who could then get vouchers into the hands of people who did not panhandle, that we are promoting that end of the program a bit more now. I mean, vouchers were so attractive to so many people that they received more attention. So we are pushing the other end of it now, and when we do our community outreach, speaking to schools, neighborhood organizations, all the business organizations in Berkeley, we go into great detail about the impact of the donation end of the program. And you can do both in the same business. In the same store where you go in to buy vouchers, there is a coin collection box that you can drop some extra change in.

We also have people who actually buy vouchers and then donate them to social service providers to make available to people who don't panhandle.

Ms. MADDOCK. If I could just add onto that, the other thing is that through the service providers, we have offered every individual in the community a way to participate in this program. Not everyone is comfortable dealing with a panhandler face-to-face, and we recognize that, and we realized that this was a way that they did not have to get an 800 number to find out where there were service providers in Berkeley; they could just go into their business that they would normally shop in, just like the people who are going to buy vouchers can, they can go in there and make a contribution and feel good that they have also helped the homeless in a way that is comfortable for them. That was very important.

Senator BINGAMAN. Let me ask if you have been able to detect any change in the number of homeless people, in the ability of the homeless in Berkeley to get on their feet again and find homes, or shelter, or get a job or whatever. Is there anything that you can document with regard to that since the program started?

Ms. RHINE. Well, Berkeley Cares is a small part of a pretty elaborate social service provider network in Berkeley. What the voucher/donation/Berkeley Cares program has done is help people who do not panhandle and educate the community about panhandling.

The other thing it has done is that panhandlers who receive vouchers feel that they are treated in a more humane way, which means they tend to be less angry, and there tends to be less acting out on the street.

So we can say that there has definitely been a decline in aggressive panhandling in Berkeley. This is based on observations in commercial districts; it is based on police calls for servicing aggressive panhandling problems. And we are very pleased with that. So it is a small thing, but it is crucial, because what we are really talking about here is that it breaks everyone's heart to see a person begging on the street. I mean, this is the richest country in the world, and we have a lot of people on the street begging. But the problem is how do you really help those people, as an individual, without contributing to behavior that might lead the panhandler to engage in behavior that later on you won't like.

We know that a lot of street behavior that is considered inappropriate is related to mental illness, alcoholism, and other substance abuse. So by giving money to help people procure alcohol or drugs,

and later in the day, they are hassling you as you walk down the street—that is not very enlightened self-interest.

So what this program has done is educate the community about how they can help in a positive way, which means that people feel better about helping. This is really what the program does. It makes the community say, "We can solve this problem." There is so much hopelessness and helplessness around homeless and abject poverty, and as I said in our written statement, we have a whole generation of children growing up in this country who don't remember a time when there weren't people living in doorways and out of shopping carts, begging for money on the streets. This has been a massive change in our lifetime.

So by educating people that there is a positive, hopeful way to help people, that is in many ways the most positive impact of the program. And then the service providers tell us that a panhandler or a poor person on the street feels like a human being again when he or she is treated compassionately by their community, when people are actively involved in dealing with them. And that is beyond value when you are helping someone climb back out.

Now, we are very lucky because we have this extensive social services network. Indeed, Berkeley is a leader in our county and in northern California in providing services because it is an extreme value in our community. And we are working with other communities to develop what we call "fair share," so that cities in our county that provide no services for homeless people, but will buy them a bus ticket or a subway ticket and send them to Berkeley, we are telling those communities you have to do your fair share with your people because we can't carry the whole burden. And slowly, that message is being passed along, and we see Berkeley Cares type programs eventually evolving in the other cities in our county. But it has to be done at the local level, at the county level, at the State level and at the national level, because no one community can solve this problem themselves. We as a country have to be realistic about what we can do, and we have to do it. And again, I think your legislation is a really good way to get people involved at the local level in being hopeful about making a change.

Ms. MADDOCK. Just to add on to that, though, you asked about has this made any changes in people's lives. There is a service provider who has started a whole program based on the funds he has been receiving from Berkeley Cares, and that is a graffiti program. It employs homeless people to go and do painting over graffiti. The funds to buy the equipment for that and to staff that partly comes from Berkeley Cares. That is what he uses his money for is that program. So that has directly impacted the lives of some homeless people in Berkeley.

Senator BINGAMAN. Well, I am very impressed with what you have done out there, and I think it is exactly what we need to see happen in other communities. I am sure there are a lot of other good examples around this country, but I don't know about them. Is there any central repository of information that you know of about what communities around the community are doing to deal with homelessness?

Ms. MADDOCK. Are you referring to other programs who started as "Care" programs, or just in general?

Senator BINGAMAN. Similar to yours. You said you've gotten over 500 calls in the year you have been there. Have you run across other programs that are also exemplary?

Ms. MADDOCK. Yes, yes. Seattle has started a program that is doing very well. Portland has started a program; Chicago.

Senator BINGAMAN. Do they involve vouchers, or not?

Ms. MADDOCK. Yes. They are modelled after our program; all of these programs. There is a program in Boulder, CO. There are numerous programs that are interested in getting started, but ones that come to my mind include a program that has started in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, modelled after our program that was started by a police officer there; there is a group in Seattle, as I mentioned, that was started by a business association; there is a program in Chicago that started out of a church group. The examples that I just gave you, though, show the diversity of the types of groups, also, that are interested in this programs and feel that it can work. And this to me is also a great example to say that this isn't a program that can just work in Berkeley—because sometimes we are labelled as, "Oh, yes—but that's Berkeley." These are all very different cities, with very different groups, who have started these programs, and it is working for them.

I believe there are about 12 cities that have started programs, and there are numerous other cities that have inquired and that are in different stages of developing programs. There have been numerous requests, actually, in the Washington, DC area; New York has a program that they are trying to get started in the West Side. It has been very extensive, all over; in practically every State, we have had requests. I don't know the exact number, but close to every State in the United States has contacted us through some individual.

Senator BINGAMAN. Well, it is a great tribute to you that you have stimulated so much interest. Let me thank you both very much for testifying. We are going to try to go forward with this legislation. If we are successful and are able to do this, then obviously we will be calling on you to help us get it implemented.

Ms. MADDOCK. It will be our pleasure.

Ms. RHINE. It certainly would be.

Senator BINGAMAN. That's great. Thank you very much.

Senator BINGAMAN. I'll call our second panel now, which includes Ellen Adan, from Albuquerque, who is president of the Nob Hill Merchants Association there; and also, Audrey Hendricks, who works with the Salvation Army here in Washington, DC.

I am informed that we were going to have a representative of the District of Columbia Government, Vincent Gray, director of the District of Columbia's Human Services Department, but he was not able to be here because of an emergency court appearance, but I am informed that they do support the American Cares Act and will submit testimony for the record on this.

Ellen, why don't you describe your thoughts about how this might be useful in Albuquerque in the Nob Hill area?

STATEMENTS OF ELLEN ADAN, PRESIDENT, NOB HILL MERCHANTS ASSOCIATION, ALBUQUERQUE, NM, AND AUDREY HENDRICKS, SALVATION ARMY, WASHINGTON, DC

Ms. ADAN. Thank you, Senator.

I am president of Nob Hill Merchants Association, as you said. We are a district right along the old Route 66 in Albuquerque—the transient route through Albuquerque for everyone who sees Albuquerque as an oasis—whether you are a tourist, or whether you are on hard times, it seems that you end up on Central Avenue.

Nob Hill is a 16-block area adjacent to the University of New Mexico. We are a little east of the downtown area and east of the main tourist areas, although we have become somewhat of a destination ourselves. We were a rundown area when the businesses moved out back in the late 1960's, early 1970's, and a lot of small businesses and entrepreneurial businesses started moving in because it was a low-rent district.

Now, because of the ambience, the pedestrian atmosphere, and the proximity of the university, I think, we are one of the first areas in the city to experience the extreme panhandling on a regular basis.

Just recently, it has gotten extremely aggressive and has expanded to other areas of the city. We formed our group about 2 years ago to handle many problems that small merchants have—joint advertising, as well as trying to get services from the city. And one of the things that we recognized from the beginning as a problem we had was that many of the people in our area are extremely generous. I have seen people give panhandlers \$5. In one instance, a man was in my shop, telling me about the fact that he had just given somebody \$20 because he didn't have any small change. I thought, "My Lord, you may have killed that man. It's a good thing it isn't winter," because we see a lot of exposure cases in the winter. It is mild in Albuquerque in the winter, but it gets pretty cold at night, and a lot of people don't make it through the night if they are drunk.

We have also seen in Albuquerque an extreme decline this summer in the good service providers, private service providers, mostly linked to religious groups.

Senator BINGAMAN. Do you mean a decline in the contributions?

Ms. ADAN. Their contributions are way off, and they are having trouble servicing the people in need because all of the people who normally are generous are getting burned out with the situation that we have now. Police have started to crack down and arrest panhandlers all over the city, and this is a real negative thing, and the panhandlers are turning around and saying the only way we have to get money now is to turn to crime. So we are having confrontations between people, and this is not good.

We have been questioning what we could do that would be positive, that would help people really in need and benefit everyone. One of our merchants went to Seattle last summer and found out about the coupon system they had instituted there, and it was working fairly well. We started talking about that, and everyone started mentioning Berkeley Cares. Then we went down and talked to the president of the Albuquerque Care Alliance, who is a coordi-

nator for homeless services—I believe she is the lady who spoke to you, Marcia Avilla.

Senator BINGAMAN. That's right.

Ms. ADAN. So we were interested, but we had a lot of questions. We did not know how to begin ourselves, where to start. Because we are just one small volunteer group, with almost no treasury, we didn't think we could afford to even print the coupons or get going in a program like this. So we recognize that we need a lot of help, and I have learned a lot today, and I am just grateful for being here.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Adan follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ELLEN ADAN, PRESIDENT, NOB HILL MERCHANTS
ASSOCIATION

Senators, thank you for allowing me to come before you today on behalf of S. 1190. Nob Hill is a 16 block area along the old route 66 running East and West thru Albuquerque. It is directly adjacent to the campus of the University of New Mexico on the West. It is largely an area reclaimed from the neglect and urban blight of the 1970's and early 1980's. It is peopled by a strong community spirit of residents and local business, primarily very small, entrepreneurial type business. It is well diversified and has residents who are senior citizens, growing families, university students, professionals, and the upwardly mobile. The businesses provide accounting services, ad agencies, graphic artists, printers, galleries, bookstores, grocery and drug stores, hair stylists, clothing retailers, import ships, night clubs, theaters, coffee houses and fine restaurants, to mention only a few. In the last few years it is become a shopping and tourist destination, especially for those seeking a "bonhomie" type atmosphere. It has also become a draw for the homeless.

Albuquerque, in the heart of the sun Belt, has a climate that allows street access most of the year. It's relatively mild winters are a magnet for transients from all over the country. The old Route 66 thru town is the route of most of them. Hospitals, shelters, human service agencies are located within a few blocks or miles of Nob Hill. The local residents and business people are here on a regular basis. They get to know each other well. They get to know the local panhandlers, the street people who have "reality" problems, and can tell when a new face turns up in trouble.

Visitors from other parts of town or the country, who are not aware of the street dynamic taking place have become targets for panhandlers. Unfortunately the desire to help is often misplaced. Five dollars given to someone who looks like he hasn't eaten all week is used to facilitate the purchase of alcohol. The donor returns from his movie and coffee house to find the same person, drunk, in a parking lot and again accosting him for a handout. The donor is outraged that he's been "taken". Meanwhile, legitimate shelters, homeless services, and soup kitchens are steadily seeing the level of private giving in Albuquerque going down.

Our merchants group was formed about 2 years ago to foster cooperation among merchants, attract local funding for spruce-up projects and needed additional city services. One of our concerns, almost from the beginning, has been the homeless problem. One of our merchants was in Seattle a year ago and saw a coupon for purchase in a district similar to ours. We discussed the idea and learned about the "Berkeley Cares" program, already in existence. Since we are a volunteer group with low dues and no funding we realized we could do nothing alone. We also knew that the Albuquerque problem is larger than our 16 block stretch.

With this in mind, earlier this year, we contacted Marsha McMurray—Avial, president of Albuquerque Care Alliance. We let her know we were interested in helping in the effort to get a coupon voucher system working here. We are very excited that our Senator, the Honorable Jeff Bingaman, has sponsored the attempt to deal with the truly needy in a more humanized way. We are well aware that hard core addicts will likely toss coupons they do not want. Yet those in need may be only too happy to receive them, and the donor who knows that his gift goes directly to helping a real person and not a faceless agency will be encouraged to give, and give again.

We are still unsure of the role we, as individual merchants will play in this new system. Many of us see ourselves as vendors of coupons, accepting cash from the general public and dispensing coupons that can be given directly to needs people. Others may see their establishments as redeemers of the coupons, which will in turn be redeemed by a central agency for cash, for reduced cost goods and services.

Larger chain operations may be buyers or vendors of very low cost goods that could be merchandised out of special outlets to coupon holders only.

We also see our role as one of education to the general public to gain acceptance of this new idea. We have to let potential donors know that they do more good for the buck by purchasing coupons than by dispensing cash. Coupons rejected by those looking for cash and thrown away or destroyed will only mean more funds in the general pool for the truly needy. The hard core panhandler will quickly find that his scam no longer works and will move on or get a job to help meet his needs. Meanwhile people trying to get back on their feet from temporary setbacks will be able to get laundry done, ride the bus, get grooming materials to enable them to get to job interviews, and be accepted back into the mainstream. Their self-respect will be aided and they will be encouraged to be productive again.

Some of the concerns that we saw in setting up a program were:

1. That coupons or vouchers be difficult to counterfeit.
 2. That a list of homeless services be provided, perhaps on the reverse of the coupon.
 3. That the program would be ineffective unless it was city wide.
 4. That the voucher can be used almost as soon as it is in the recipients hand.
 5. That the voucher brings something that is really meaningful to the recipient.
- In hope that at least some of our concerns and goals be met, we are hoping Albuquerque can set up an experimental program, such as the type suggested in this bill. Only then will we know if this idea is as good as it sounds.

Senator BINGAMAN. Thank you very much for being here.

Obviously, I have a parochial interest in seeing the problems you described dealt with in New Mexico, but it seems to me that the kind of program they have implemented in Berkeley might be a clear preference to just going around and arresting more and more people, which seems to be what is occurring in Albuquerque at the present time. I don't think that can possibly be the long-term solution to this problem.

Ms. ADAN. No. I myself am a dealer in antiques, and we have rare coins, and we buy gold and silver and things like that. And we see a lot of people on the fringes. They are not technically homeless, but they are desperate; they are often staying with someone else, living with a relative, or they are in a motel room. And they come to sell whatever they think may have any value. Frequently, it doesn't. But they are desperate.

And just the idea, in my mind, that we could direct people to the right places in a gentle way, that these coupons would be available so that you could give them out, and they would have immediate benefit to people who need real aid—because it is not hard after a while when you are dealing with the public to tell who is on drugs and wants money, who is trying to fence stolen goods and so on. After a while, it becomes pretty obvious. And a lot of people who are in need are afraid to ask for help. They don't want to bend over and ask for outright assistance. But to be given something that would not taint them and would also have information on how to seek additional aid through social service agencies, which in many cases they are totally unaware of, I would see as a benefit.

Senator BINGAMAN. All right. Thank you very much for that testimony.

Audrey Hendricks works with the Salvation Army here in the District of Columbia. We appreciate you being here very much, and we are anxious to hear your thoughts about this.

Ms. HENDRICKS. Thank you, Senator. I am happy to be here.

I came onboard with the Salvation Army about 2 months ago. The Salvation Army is part of the Downtown Community Partnership here in the District of Columbia. About a year ago, it was sug-

gested that they do a voucher program in Washington, but unfortunately, it never got off the ground.

When I came onboard, we talked a lot about the voucher program, and that is one of my assignments is to coordinate this program.

As you probably know, on June 1st here in the District of Columbia, emergency legislation was passed to arrest aggressive panhandlers. At that time, the Salvation Army took it upon themselves to say that they would find a solution to the problem of panhandling. And of course, when I came onboard, the Berkeley concept was at the top of everybody's thoughts.

So we decided to contact Amy Maddock—well, we first contacted the mayor's office in Berkeley, and they referred us to Berkeley Cares. I spoke with Amy several times, and she was nice enough to send us all the materials we needed, and we also have the manual. We are now about to embark on that program.

I went into the community to ask the business leaders, the church leaders, organizations and civic groups, and of course, community-based organizations as well as homeless providers, their feelings about this voucher program, because I don't know if you are aware that there are some programs here in the District in various sections of town that have cards telling you where the service providers are and asking you to make a donation, but it is not as comprehensive or as well-planned as the Berkeley concept.

I would like to read to you two of the letters, Senator, that we have received thus far in support of the voucher program, using the Berkeley concept.

Senator BINGAMAN. Go right ahead.

Ms. HENDRICKS. The first one comes from the Washington Marriott Hotel. It says: "Dear Ms. Hendricks, thank you for seeking the support of the Washington Marriott Hotel for the Salvation Army's voucher program. With the recent passing of the law in the District of Columbia prohibiting panhandling in certain areas not only by the homeless, but unemployed citizenry as well, I certainly feel that the voucher program would be a worthwhile endeavor. It seems fitting that an organization such as the Salvation Army would be spearheading this cause, and I commend you and your organization for helping to aid in preserving some dignity to the homeless, unemployed and others in need. It is my pleasure to inform you that I applaud and support your efforts in this worthwhile endeavor, and I wish you the very best of success." That is from P. David Spurley, the general manager of the Washington Marriott Hotel.

This letter says: "Dear Ms. Hendricks, we certainly support any compassionate effort to respond to the serious problems which arise around panhandling. The homeless community is doing what it must to survive. However, some of the aggressive behavior is seriously turning off a community which has been understanding in the past. This is certainly making the effort to do effective programming for the homeless much more difficult. Your development of a voucher program seems to us to be a constructive and positive way to respond to the need until we can develop lasting solutions to the plight of the homeless. You have the support of the Church Association for Community Services in the effort to institute the



voucher program, and we hope that the business community will be supportive."

That is from the Reverend Cannon Quasi A. Thornell, who is the executive director.

Senator BINGAMAN. Thank you very much. Does that complete your testimony?

Ms. HENDRICKS. I would also like to say that the success of the program will depend on the community at large, and the Salvation Army certainly welcomes the challenge, and we look forward to this program here in the District of Columbia.

Senator BINGAMAN. Thank you very much, Ms. Hendricks. I know the Salvation Army does great work in a whole variety of areas, and I appreciate your willingness to testify today very much.

And Ellen, I appreciate you coming all the way to Washington from Albuquerque to testify. I hope we can get a program like this going in Albuquerque, and with your leadership, maybe we can.

Ms. ADAN. Thank you very much. It has really been an honor to be here, and I would like to see a program started.

Senator BINGAMAN. OK. That will conclude our hearing, and let me again thank all the witnesses. I do think we have built a record that we can use with the remainder of the committee to urge them to move ahead with this legislation and hopefully get it enacted this year.

Sometimes, if you are not proposing a total solution to a problem, people don't think it is worth a whole lot of attention, and this is not proposed as a total solution to the problem of homelessness, but it is a major step in the right direction, and the people in Berkeley deserve a lot of credit for having initiated it, and I hope we can stimulate other communities to do the same thing through this legislation.

Thank you all again. That will conclude our hearing.

[Whereupon, at 1:07 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]

